

DOCTRINE

OF

Remission of Sins,

AND THE

POWER OF ABSOLUTION,

As set forth in a late Sermon,

Explain'd and Vindicated:

IN

REMARKS

ON

Dr. Cannon's Account of his two
Motions in the *Lower House* of
Convocation.

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DOCTRINE

RELIGIOUS

OF REVOLUTION

Explained and Vindicated

IN



Two

L. D. 1833

1833

THE
DOCTRINE
OF
Remission of Sins, &c.

Explain'd and Vindicated, &c.

WHEN the Letter, pretended to be written to me, *about a Motion in Convocation*, was first Publish'd, I bought it, and read it carefully over, designing, if I should find any thing in it that look'd like a solid, serious Answer, to my Sermon on *Remission of Sins*, to make some Sort of Reply to it, and either to acknowledge my self mistaken (which I should readily do, if I found that I was so) or justify and defend the Doctrine I had Preach'd. But when I had perus'd it, I thought it so trifling and impertinent, as not to deserve my Notice, nor have I yet met with any Body, that has read it, who seems to be of another Opinion. I was soon inform'd that it was full of Misrepresentations, and that the Author had not given a fair Account of what was said in the House. And Dr. Cannon has now thought convenient to satisfy me and the World, that what I had

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heard was no more than the Truth. For he says, *it would tire the Reader, if he should set right all the Mis-representations of the Letter-Writer.* Though it seems he is persuaded, he had no ill Intention in the writing of it. However, since the Doctor himself has now been pleas'd to give us a true Account of both the Motions he thought fit to make in the Convocation, concerning the Power of Remitting Sins, I think it behoves me to say something on this Occasion, not only to vindicate the Doctrine I Preach'd, but to justify the Lower House of Convocation, for not examining and censuring it, at the Doctor's Request. This I shall do, by considering the Arguments he made Use of, and shewing their Weakness and Invalidity.

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He says that he observ'd, *that in the very Beginning of my Discourse on the 1st. Head, I took care to explain what was meant by the Power, left with the Apostles, to remit or retain Sins: That it was to pardon or forgive Sins, or else to bind them more closely, so as the Sinner should not be releas'd from his Sin, or pardoned by God, till they had releas'd him also. And that soon after I thus explain our Lord's Words to the Apostles, Joh. xx. 21. As my Father hath sent me, so send I you; The same*

Ser. p. 12.

Power which my Father has committed to me, the same do I now confer upon you. But he leaves out the latter part of the Sentence, *whom I appoint to act in my Name, as my Vicars-general or Substitutes.* Which last Words clearly explain my Meaning, and shew that I did not intend to have it thought, that the Apostles were hereby made equal in Power with Christ, but only that he constituted them his commission'd Officers to act under him, and in his Name. He was still their Master, and they

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but his Servants: And though he gave them a great Power, yet it was but subordinate to his own: They were accountable to him for all their Acts; and if they should do any thing which was not warranted by their Commission, it was of no Force or Validity. Therefore how shocking soever this Passage may appear, as the Doctor has put it down, yet take the whole Period together, and I believe Nobody will think it so. But if a Man will take the Liberty to cite half Periods, he may make any thing appear shocking.

As to the former Passage, which the Doctor again repeats, at p. 15. and says, *it could not but be very shocking to him, how agreeable ever it might be to others*: I hope if it be agreeable to the Scriptures, and to the Doctrine of the Primitive Church, and our own, it may pass uncensur'd, notwithstanding he is shock'd at it. Now that it is agreeable to the Scriptures, I prov'd in my Sermon, pag. 21. where I shew'd, from 2 Cor. xi. 10. that when S. Paul had bound the incestuous Person by his Censure, *neither the Person offending, nor the Corinthians, expected Forgiveness for him in Heaven, till he had St. Paul's pardon also*. That this was likewise the Doctrine of the Primitive Church is undeniable. It was a Maxim with the Primitive Fathers, that *out of the Church there is no Salvation*, for as St. Cyprian says, (*Epist. 52. ad Corin. 1.*) *Quomodo potest esse cum Christo, qui cum Ecclesia Christi & in ejus Ecclesia non est?* And those who were bound by the Censure of Excommunication, were always look'd upon to be out of the Church, and such were not to be receiv'd again to Communion, but by the Abolution of the Bishop and Clergy; so says the Holy Father (*Epist. 17. ad Fratres in plebe*)

nec

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nec ad communicationem venire quis possit, nisi prius illi ab Episcopo & Clero manus fuerit imposita. is also plainly the Opinion of our Church since she forbids *Christian Burial* to Persons that dye excommunicate. If these Citations from St. Cyprian do not satisfy the Doctor, that was the general Opinion of the Primitive Church in his Days, *that he who was bound by the Bishop and Clergy must be also loosed by them again, or he could not be sav'd,* I have many more such Passages at his Service, when he pleases to demand them. And therefore I can not but wonder, that what is so agreeable to the Scriptures, to the Doctrine of the Primitive Church, and of our own, should be so shocking to a Dignitary of this Church, who one would think, should be better acquainted with the Scriptures, and Fathers, and the Rubricks of our Liturgy, than to be so much surpriz'd at what may be clearly justified from them.

In the next Place he observes, *that I have not rightly explain'd the Words, ver. 22.* He breathes on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. *Whereby, I say, he furnishes them with Ability or Capacity, to execute that Power and Authority he had given them.* Here, he says he took Notice in how few Words I dispatch'd this great Point in the first part of my Sermon. All this Observation amounts to, is, that I was not so large upon this Topick as the Doctor thinks I ought to have been. However, since I was right in what I did say, I hope I do not deserve to be censur'd because I was so short. But now it seems comes the finishing Stroke, *that when I come to enlarge on the Power of the Heads, and labour to shew, That the Bishops and their Presbyters have now the same Power*

apostles had; and the Usefulness of that same Power, I say not one Word of the Clergy, having now so the same Ability or Capacity to execute that Power: Whereas the Doctor thinks the same Power requir'd the same Capacity, and that it must be supposed they are convey'd together, or that either of them is convey'd at all. But why must the same Power necessarily require the same Capacity? Can no Man have the same Power which another has, unless he have the same Capacity? Have not all Presbyters (for Instance) the same Power to preach the Word, and minister the Sacraments? Yet I conceive the Doctor will not say they have all the same Capacity. If the same Power could not be convey'd but upon Men of the same Capacity, it would perhaps be impossible to confer the same Power on any two Men in the World. And therefore, tho' it were admitted, that Bishops and their Presbyters had not the same Capacity, which was conferr'd on the Apostles, when Christ breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, yet it would not therefore follow that they were incapable of the same Power. Neither is it necessary that the Capacity should be conferr'd, together with the Power. The Capacity may precede the Power, and generally speaking, ought to do so: And the Capacity may be much improved after the Receipt of the Power, and yet the Power is still the same. Our Power as Presbyters is the same the Day we are ordained, that it will be twenty Years after, but if we do not improve, as to our Capacity at that time, we shall deserve to be very much blamed. However, that we may be satisfied, whether Bishops and their Presbyters have or, or cannot have that Ability or Capacity, which Christ conferr'd on his Apostles,

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when he said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, I will enquire what this Ability and Capacity was which he then conferr'd upon them.

Now by the *Holy Ghost* in this Place, we must understand the *ordinary* or *extraordinary Gifts*, or *Assistances* of that blessed Spirit. By the *ordinary Gifts* or *Assistances* of the *Holy Ghost*, we understand those Gifts and Graces which are necessary for all Times and all Places; and for all Christians, according to their several Degrees and Stations in the Church *viz.* That the *Holy Ghost* should co-operate with them, assist, guide and direct them in the Discharge of their proper *Duties* and *Functions*. Enlighten their Understandings, enlarge their Capacities, and lead them into all Truth, though not with an infallible Direction, yet with such sufficient Assistance as shall, if not willfully and obstinately resisted, preserve them from any dangerous Error. And according to a Man's Station is in the Church, so he may hope for greater and larger Assistances of the Spirit, if he be not wanting to himself in the right and due Use of them. The *extraordinary Gifts* of the Spirit, are *the Gift of Languages by Inspiration, Prophecy, the Power to work Miracles, &c.* Which are I think allowed of all Hands not to be always necessary, but were most highly expedient in the first Ages of the Church, both for the Confirmation and Propagation of the Christian Faith.

That they were not the *extraordinary*, but only the *ordinary Gifts* of the *Holy Ghost*, which Christ conferr'd on his Apostles, when he breathed on them upon this occasion, is I think manifest, because the extraordinary Gifts were not conferr'd upon them till the Day of Pentecost *Act. xi. 1. &c.* We cannot doubt, but they received the *Holy Ghost* at the very Time our

our breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost : For he did not say, Ye shall receive the Spirit hereafter, but receive him now this very Time. And shall we think that those Words were without Effect? That he should say, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, and at the same time should not give the Holy Ghost? But it is evident that he did not then give them the extraordinary Gifts, such as should qualify or fit them to perform such wonderful Works in Christ's Name, as might, as it were, compel those that saw them to embrace the Gospel, and draw Strangers to the Faith; his miraculous Power was afterwards conferred. But he enlightened their Understandings, and enlarged the Faculties of their Minds, that they might know the Scriptures, and be enabled to expound them rightly, and apply them properly, as St. Peter afterwards did in the Case of choosing another Apostle in the Room of Judas, Act. i. 15. &c. before the miraculous Descent of the Holy Ghost. Which extraordinary Assistance or Gift of the Blessed Spirit must continue in the Church, and co-operate with the Ministers of it, or else Christ does not fulfil his Promise, John xiv. 16. That his Comforter should abide with us for ever.

In the next Place, it is evident, that the Power given to the Apostles to remit Sins, was not founded on the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which they were afterwards to receive, because it does not appear that they always acted by Virtue of those extraordinary Gifts, in the execution of this Power. The Anonymous Author of the Defence of the Doctrine of the Church of England, p. 61. tells us, That Arch-bishop Tillotson says, As he believed that the Text of remitting Sins, contain'd more than a meer declaratory Power,

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Power, so that it was a Power peculiar to Apostles, who by the Gift of discerning Spirits were peculiarly qualified for the Discharge of it, seems this great Man did not think those Words *Whose soever Sins ye remit, &c.* stood for nothing, and Doctor *Canon* himself does not, as I apprehend him, seem to believe that the Apostles had not a Power given them by those Words, but that it was peculiar to them, by Reason of some extraordinary Gift of the *Holy Ghost* conferred upon them, together with the Power. But how does this appear from the Scripture? Where is there the least Intimation in the New Testament, that the Apostles forgave Sins, by the Virtue of their Gift to discern Spirits, or of any other extraordinary Capacity that attended them, to make them infallible in their Determinations? Is there one Word mention'd of any such Gift, either in the Text, or in the Context? *Christ* did indeed say, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, and thereby I doubt not opened their Understandings, and enlighten'd their Minds with greater Knowledge, and larger Capacities; not that he gave them all Knowledge at once, but made them more susceptible of it, that by the Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*, which they then receiv'd, they might make better and greater Improvements in Spiritual Wisdom, than they could before. That it was only this Gift of the Spirit which was then conferred upon them, is plain, because in the exercise of their Power to remit Sins, there is not any thing tending to show that they discerned the Spirits of those whose Sins they remitted; or that they proceeded by any infallible Direction in that Matter. Were they not subject to Error in the exercise of the Keys? Did they admit none into the Church

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arch but sincere Converts? How came
y then to baptize *Ananias*, and *Sapphira*, and
on *Magus*, for the Remission of their Sins,
o appear'd afterwards to be no other than
er Hypocrites and Deceivers? It is plain,
y proceeded no otherwise than their Suc-
ors (if the Doctor will allow that they
ve any Successors) may do in the like Case,
l accepted their open Profession of Faith
d Repentance, which they supposed to be
cere, till their after-Acts discovered the
ntrary. So that it is evident, the Apostles,
those whom they Commissioned to remit
s by Baptism, had not the Gift of discern-
g Spirits, in the Ministration of this Sacra-
ent. And yet it is certain from *Acts* xi. 38.
at Remission of Sins was one great End or Pur-
se, for which they ministred that Sacra-
ent. And no doubt Sins were remitted by
when it was ministred to those who were
ly qualified for it. Sins are also remitted
ow by Baptism, as they were then, or else
at Sacrament must have lost its Primitive
ature: And to say that Sins are not now re-
itted by Baptism, is to renounce an Article
f our Creed, where we profess to *acknowledge*
e Baptism for the remission of Sins. If therefore
Priest may now remit Sins, by the Ministra-
on of the Sacrament of Baptism, as the
apostles did, though they have not the Gift
f discerning Spirits, or any other infallible Di-
ection to judge of the Sincerity of the Faith
nd Repentance of the Person to be baptiz'd,
ow can the Gift of discerning Spirits, or any
other infallible Direction of the Spirit be a
Qualification necessary to the Exercise of a
Commission to forgive Sins?

I sup-

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I suppose I may also say, that Sins are remitted by the other Sacrament, where the truly devout Communicant (under the Symbol of Bread and Wine) receives the Body of Christ which was broken, and his Blood which was shed for the Remission of Sins: Where, as our Church teaches, *we spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ, and drink his Blood; we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us.* And can we partake of all these great Benefits, and yet our Sins remain unpardoned? I have in my Sermon chiefly insisted on the Priest's Power to Remit Sins by the Ministration of these Sacraments: Which neither Dr. Cannon, nor my Anonymous Friend has offer'd to deny; but only insist in general. That the Priest has no Power to Remit Sins because he has not the *Capacity* of the Apostle, says one, because he has not the Gift of *discerning Spirits*, says the other. But will either of them say, that Sins are not remitted by the Sacraments, when rightly and duly administered by a Priest, and receiv'd by a Person duly qualified for them? Or that the Priest has no Power, no Authority to minister the Sacraments for the Remission of Sins? And is there a greater *Capacity* requir'd, a greater Gift of *discerning Spirits* necessary for the declaring and pronouncing to the Penitent, the Absolution and Remission of his Sins, than to remit his Sins by the Ministration of one of the Sacraments? It is certain, that the Apostles and their Contemporaries, though they had extraordinary miraculous Gifts and Qualifications to be exerted at some Times, and on some Occasions, yet had not, or at least did not, ordinarily exercise those Gifts in the Ministration of the Sacraments for Remission of Sins. I have shew'd it already, with Relation

to the Ministration of Baptism, and it appears to have been the same with Regard to the Lord's Supper: For the Priests at *Corinth* gave the Sacrament to many unworthy Persons who *eat and drank Damnation to themselves*, and punished those unworthy Receivers with Sickness and Death, *1 Cor. xi. 29, 30*. But *St. Paul* blamed not the Priests of that Church, nor did he think them they had no Authority to minister the Sacrament, which was appointed for the Remission of Sins, as well as all other Benefits of *Christ's Death*, because they either had not received, or did not exercise the Gift of discerning Spirits, or any other miraculous Power in that Ministration.

And is there a greater Capacity requir'd, or a greater Gift of discerning Spirits, necessary for the declaring and pronouncing to a Person, being Penitent, the *Absolution* and *Remission* of his Sins, than there is for the Remission of his Sins by the Ministration of either of the Sacraments. The Person be duly qualified by Faith and Repentance, a Sacrament duly administered will sign and seal his Pardon: But if he wants these Qualifications, the Sacrament will be so far from giving him Remission, that it will be exceedingly to the Weight of his Sins.

I conceive it is the same in what we call Absolution. For altho' *Absolution bath the Promise of forgiveness of Sins*, as our Church teaches, yet, I conceive, if Faith and Repentance be wanting in the Person who receives it, do not accompany that Act, it will not only procure no remission in Heaven, but shall also increase the Burthen of his Sins. If then the Act of ministering the Sacraments, and pronouncing Absolution to the Penitent, be the same, with regard to remission of Sins, and the

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Common
Prayer &
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the Sacraments be in other Respects of a noble and sanctifying Nature, as they not only convey the Pardon of Sin, but also Strengthen and Grace, and an Assurance of Eternal Life, why should we imagine that larger Capacities, and more extraordinary Endowments, and a Gift of discerning Spirits should be required, to give a Priest Authority to pronounce Absolution, than to Minister the Sacraments? Sure he that has Capacity for the greater Ministry, has Capacity also for the less.

It appears also from the Scriptures, that the Apostles and their Contemporaries did administer the Sacraments, by Virtue of their Capacities, or their Gift of discerning Spirits, or any other extraordinary Qualification which they had, but merely by Authority of Commission, so also they pronounced Absolution to the Penitent, without the use of miraculous Gifts. Thus in the Instance made use of in my Sermon, for an Example of the Apostles remitting Sins, by a Form of Absolution: If we consider St. Paul's whole Proceeding on this Occasion, it will appear he did not act in this Matter, by Virtue of his Gift of discerning Spirits, and that he proceeded no otherwise than any of his Successors may do at this Day, by examining the Matter, and pronouncing Judgment according to the Evidence he receiv'd. The whole Process is excellently describ'd by the Author of *Lay-Baptism Invalid*, in his Treatise of *Sacramental Powers*, pag. 22. and I cannot give a fuller and clearer Account of it than in his Words: " St. Paul being at *Philippi*, a City of *Thracia*, heard a common Report, that the Christians of *Corinth* were guilty of the Sin of Fornication, 1 Cor. v. 1. and particu-

that one of them incestuously took his
 father's Wife ; — Upon which he wrote
 them, and commanded them to excom-
 municate this incestuous Person, *v. 3, 4, 5*
13. which they accordingly did. —
 In his second Epistle, he tells them the
 reason of his Writing, and commanding
 them so to censure that notorious Sinner,
that he might know the Proof of them, whether
they were obedient in all things, 2 Cor. xi. 9.
 He did not by Virtue of the miraculous
 Gift of discerning Spirits, know their Obe-
 dience at that Distance ; He wanted a
 Proof thereof, which they accordingly gave
 him, by the Infliction of that Punishment
 on the Offender, which he had command-
 ed ; and which *Titus*, upon his Return from
Corinth, acquainted St. Paul with, as is plain
 from 2 Cor. vii 6. 12. &c. — The Apostle
 being thus inform'd of the Obedience of the
Corinthians, and also of the Sorrow and Re-
 pentance of the incestuous Person, writes to
 them to forgive him, 2 Cor. xi. 6, 7, 8. And
 to encourage them thereto, pronounces his
 absolution himself, though at that Distance
 from them, upon the Credit which he gave
 to *Titus's* Relation of that Affair ; for, says
 he, *To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also*
the person of Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 10. or by the
 Authority which I have receiv'd from *Jesus*
Christ. — And one Reason why he would
 have the incestuous Person absolv'd, was,
as in ver. 7.] lest perhaps such a one should
be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow ; This
 putting it upon a [*perhaps*] does no ways
 comport with any infallible Knowledge that
 the Apostle could have of the Penitent's Sor-
 row : For if he had by a miraculous Gift of
 Dis-

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“ Discerning, known the true Nature
 “ *certain* Effects thereof, he would never
 “ us’d so doubtful an *Argument* ; but rather
 “ affirm’d *positively*, without any *perha*
 “ that the incestuous Person would *certain*
 “ *be swallowed* up with overmuch Sorrow
 “ And since he was not thus *positive*, it is plain
 “ that he had only a *moral Assurance* of
 “ Man’s Sorrow and Repentance, given
 “ by the Report of others, whom he esteem’d
 “ worthy of Credit ; and therefore the Abolition
 “ he pronounc’d, was not founded upon
 “ any infallible Knowledge that he had
 “ that notorious Sinner’s Repentance, com-
 “ municated to him by Vertue of the mira-
 “ culous Gift of Discerning Spirits.” This

ingenious Gentleman prosecutes the Argument
 further, but I shall transcribe no more
 it, but refer the Reader to the Book it self.
 What is transcribed, being sufficient for
 Purpose, which was to shew that the ordinary
 Gifts of the Spirit, qualified the Apostles
 the exercise of this Power, and that their Suc-
 cessors are also qualified in the same manner
 and have the same *Capacity* or *Ability*, though
 perhaps not in the same Degree, which was
 conferred on the Apostles, when he gave them
 a Commission to *remit Sins*. For I hope
 shops and their Presbyters are capable of en-
 quiring into the Repentance of a Sinner
 moral Evidence, and pronouncing Pardon
 on supposition of his Sincerity, and St. Peter
 himself did no more. And if they should be
 mistaken in their Judgment, it is but what
 the Apostle himself might have been, since
 is so plain that he proceeded not by an in-
 fallible Direction ; for if he had, he would
 have put a *perhaps* into the Reason for

ving so speedy an Absolution. And I would
fire the Anonymous Gentleman to produce
me Evidence from Scripture, as well as the
re Assertion of a great Man, to prove that
is Commission, which he owns the Apostles
d to *remit Sins*, was founded on the Gift they
d of *discerning Spirits*, since it is so evident,
at one of them executed this Commission in
Case, wherein it appears that he was not
ided or directed by that Gift, but proceeded
such Humane Means, as any Man, who
s the Commission (though he has not that
ift) might make use of. And if either the
ctor, or that Gentleman had read the *Trea-*
e of *Sacerdotal Powers* beforemention'd, par-
cularly from p. 15. to p. 27. they would have
and these Objections so well answer'd there,
at they would have seen no occasion to have
peated them.

In the next Place the Doctor says, he read
m p. 16. *the following Words*. "That his
Church might not suffer in his Absence,
for want of Pastors and Governours to take
care of it, he committed all his Power and
Authority, as Head of the Church, to his
Apostles. This the Text expresly shews, *As*
my Father sent me, says Christ, *so send I you*.
As if he had said, with the same Power and
Authority that my Father sent me into the
World to constitute and govern my Church,
I send you and your Successors, &c." I
ppose he read this as a *shocking Passage*, which
cannot allow of. But did not *Christ com-*
t or *delegate his Power* to the Apostles? Will
e Doctor himself say that they were not his
wards or *Deputies*, to act in his Name? Were
ey not Commission'd by him to publish his
aws, and declare his Will? To execute his

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Luk.xxii.
30.

Authority, by receiving into the Church, and casting out of it? To transact and treat with People in the Name of God, and to reconcile Men to God, by the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments? Were they not to *sit on Thrones* *judging the twelve Tribes of Israel*, that is, the whole Church of God? May not this be called committing all his Power and Authority as Head of the Church to the Apostles? What Authority did he exercise, which, they did not exercise under him, by Virtue of his Commission? But with this Distinction, he executed this Authority as the Head of the Church in his own Name, they in his Name as his Stewards or Commissioners, and as such were accountable to him for what they should do, and if they exceeded their Commission, their Acts were invalid, and themselves liable to be punished for such Presumption. Thus as the Father sent him, so did he send them with the *same Power* in Kind, that is, with a Power to constitute and govern the Church, though not the *same in Degree*, that is, not Supreme and Sovereign as his was, but given them by Commission, *committed* to them as unto Stewards, or chief Ministers of him the supreme Head.

Upon my *second Head* the Doctor says, *read the Words following*. “ If Bishops and the
“ Presbyters, the Successors of the Apostles
“ have a Right to pardon Sins, by the *Minis-*
“ *tration of the Word and Sacraments*; they may
“ have a Right to pardon them by *Absolution*
“ and to retain them also by *Excommunication*
“ and other Spiritual Censures, as the Apostles
“ had; and their Censures are also ratified
“ in Heaven, as those of the Apostles
“ were, so that no Power on Earth can
“ lea

leave them, but only he that bound them." Then the Doctor shall be pleased to say, who has Authority to release a pure Spiritual Censure, except he that inflicted it in any other manner than I have shew'd in my Sermon, pag. 23. as I have explain'd it in my AdVERTISEMENT before my Sermon of the *Honour of the Priesthood*, I will endeavour to give him a satisfactory Answer.

Then he says, he also observed, *That having given the Detail of the Story of Ambrose and Theodosius the Great, the one an Archbishop, and the other an Emperor, I conclude, "That this Act was agreeable to the present Doctrine of our Church, and consequently, that our Bishops have the Authority which St. Ambrose exercised, and by the Law of God may execute it, when there is just Occasion, even upon the greatest; there being no Person on Earth so great as to be exempted from this Power."* But why did he here omit the Testimony of our Book of Homilies, which I brought to shew that this was agreeable to the Doctrine of our Church? Was it fair dealing in the Doctor, to take part of the Period, and omit my Testimony from the establish'd Doctrine of our Church? I shew'd in my Sermon, pag. 25. that this Act of St. Ambrose was mention'd and approved by our Church, in the second Part of the Homily of the right Use of the Keys, and in this very Place, in the same Period, from which he has taken his Citation, I say, *those Homilies being confirmed by our Articles, are a Testimony that this Act was agreeable to the present Doctrine of our Church.* I think it happy for me, that I do not live within the Jurisdiction of the Doctor's Archdeaconry, since he was to judge me for my Doctrine, it

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would be impossible for me to escape: And should be condemned for Words contained part of a Period, when if the whole Period was to be read, it would appear that I was in the Right, and had said no more than the declared Doctrine of the Church.

However, if he did not do me *Justice* here, he did me *Justice* afterwards, and read what is quoted from the *Ordination Service*, and the *Visitation of the Sick*, that my Doctrine was no Popish Doctrine: Yet he is resolved, that Authority shall do me no good, and rather than to quit me, will insinuate, as if the Church itself was Popish in this particular, in retaining the *indicative Form of Absolution*, which, he can prove from the Authority of two of the ablest Popish Writers, on the Sacrament of Penance, began to be in use no earlier than the 13th Century. Notwithstanding what these two able Popish Writers have said, to prove the *indicative Form of Absolution*, to be but of a late Date, and that Dr. by divers Citations from them and others, and from some late pure Popish Councils, has proved, as he thinks to be perfectly moderate, yet it seems I have taken occasion, p. 20. to make in this notable Assertion, “When Men fell into Sin after Baptism, they [the Apostles] then authoritatively pronounced the Remission of Sins, to such as they found Penitent, saying, I forgive, or absolve thee from thy Sins in the Name of Christ; or to that effect.” ’Tis not to guess, says he, with what particular view he made this Assertion, nor what Texts of Scripture must produce to support it, tho’ he refers to none, but had rather, I fancy, not be called on to shew any

Now would not any one that reads this Page in the Doctor, believe that I had cited some Text of Scripture for this Assertion, since

positively affirms, that I have produc'd none ?
 is true indeed, I do not cite any Text in the
 age he refers to, nor do I think there was
 any Occasion for me to do so, because I had
 produc'd a Text in the foregoing Page, [*viz.*
 19.] and what follows, p. 20. being only
 Comment upon that Citation, though I re-
 peated the Words again, there could be no
 occasion to repeat Chapter and Verse a second
 time, since I had done it but just before. But
 because the Doctor was pleas'd to overlook the
 text I produc'd in my Sermon, notwithstanding
 he took so much Pains about it, and
 made such nice Remarks upon it, I will here
 cite the whole Verse, 2 Cor. ii. 10. *To whom ye
 forgive any thing, I forgive also: For if I forgave
 any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes for-
 give I it in the Person of Christ.* Does not the
 apostle here expressly say, that he *forgave* or
absolv'd in the Person of Christ? He does not say
 that he pray'd for *Forgiveness* for the offending
 person, but that he *actually had forgiven him*:
 not in his own Name, or by his own Authori-
 ty, but *in the Person of Christ*, or as he was the
representative of Christ. And sure, when he
 acted as the *Representative of Christ*, when he
 forgave in his Person, he acted *authoritatively*:
 and the very Word *forgave* being *Indicative*,
 shews that he did it *Indicatively* also, and the
 apostle expressly says he *forgave*. If therefore
 Paul himself says, that he *forgave* or absol-
 ved *in the Person of Christ*, did not I assert what
 was agreeable to St. Paul's Words, and plainly
 reducible from them, when I said that the A-
 postles authoritatively pronounc'd the *Remission*
Sins to such as they found penitent, saying, *I for-
 give, or absolve thee from thy Sins in the Per-
 son of Christ, or to that Effect?* For does it

not appear from St. Paul's Words, that the *Absolution* which he sent in this Epistle to the incestuous *Corinthian* was to that Effect? Who are we to believe in this Case, the Apostle or Dr. Cannon? The Apostle, says, *he forgave the Person of Christ*, but the Dr. from his Popish Writers assures us, there was no such Method of Forgiving, 'till the 13th Century. Indeed I must acknowledge, that I never consulted those Popish Writers on this Occasion, to know when the *Indicative Form of Absolution* was introduced, nor did I think there was any Reason which might make it necessary, since I had both the Authority of St. Paul, and of our own Church for it, However, it seems, that would not satisfy the Doctor; because some Popish Authors he had met with, told him that *Indicative Form* began not 'till the 13th Century: And as the Doctor has cited them, they give some plausible Reasons for this Assertion, which being only negative Proofs, are easily overthrown by one positive Proof on the other Side. I cannot say that I have met with any *Form of Absolution*, either *Precatory* (which the Doctor allows of) or *Indicative*; and perhaps it may be difficult to find one in the true Primitive Church, though we there find frequent Mention of *giving Absolution*: However, I can produce a *Form of Indicative Absolution*, given Four Hundred Years earlier than the Time assign'd by the Doctor and his Popish Friends, that is in the Ninth Century. I cannot indeed do this from the Original, because I have it not; but I conceive the Author I cite it from, may be depended on, as much as *Morinus* or *Martene*. It is in the English Translation of *Du Pin*, Cent. 9. pag. 52. where he tells us, that *Hincmarus*, Archbishop of Rheims

ius, 'Hath a Letter written to *Hildebold*, Bishop of *Soissons*, who, being Sick, had sent him a general Confession of his Sins in Writing, praying him to give him his Letters of Absolution. He writes to him again, *That by the Apostolick Authority he Absolv'd him from all his Sins, and prayed God to forgive them to him, by the Grace of his Holy Spirit, to deliver him from all Evil, to keep him in perpetual Peace and Safety, and guide him to Eternal Life.*' These are the Terms in which he gave him Absolution: To which he also added, "That being not able to come to him, and pronounce it himself, he hop'd his Ministers and Priests would do it.' Here the *Indicative* and *Precatory* Forms are both joyn'd, as with us: So that both *Morinus* and *Martene* have certainly led the Doctor into a Mistake in this Matter; since it is evident, that this double Form is so much older than they pretend. Therefore, since I find such Ground for the Indicative Form in the Scriptures, and am so well assur'd, from this Instance in *Hincmarus*, that *Morinus* and *Martene* are so entirely mistaken, in affirming this *Indicative Form*, to have been introduc'd in the thirteenth Century, though, in my little reading, I have not met with a more Ancient Form of Absolution; yet I shall (till I am inform'd from better Authority) believe, that the Indicative Form is truly Primitive. But it may be ask'd, What End could *Morinus* and *Martene* have to serve, by maintaining such a Position? I answer, That I cannot positively say, because I have not their Books, and therefore know not on what Account they pretended to make this Enquiry into the Antiquity of their present Form of Absolution. But it appears to me, that their Intent was to

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shew, That the Church has Authority to change the Essentials of the Sacraments, particularly, in their refusing the Cup to the Laity in the Lord's Supper. Now *Penance* and *Absolution* are a Sacrament in the Opinion of the *Romanists*: Therefore, if they could induce People to believe that the Church could make, and had upon good Grounds made, a *New Form of Absolution*, essential to the Sacrament (as they call it) of *Penance*, they might then more easily prevail with them to think it might have the same Authority with Regard to any other Sacrament, particularly the Lord's Supper; that as it had added an *essential Form* to one; so it might take away an *essential Part* from the other. For *Morinus* himself, as the Doctor has cited him, plainly shews, that he esteems the *Indicative Form* to be now *essential* to *Absolution*. *Quo factum*, says he, *omnes ordinarii precibus formulam adderent Indicativam, ne saltem Sacramentum dubium conferrent, quod ante Annus Christi 1300 non obtinuit. Inveterascente autem iusta consuetudine, Doctores celebres & multi definiunt Absolutionem deprecatorio more datam non valere. Meâ quidem sententiâ rectè.* From these Words it is plain, that *Morinus* himself judg'd no other Form but the *Indicative* to be of any Effect or Validity in this Sacrament, as he calls it, notwithstanding he takes such Pains to shew, that it was not introduc'd till the 13th Century. So that the main Design of his taking these Pains, seems to be to magnify the Authority of the Pope and his Church, and to persuade the World, they have Authority to change the very Essentials of the Sacraments. For *Morinus* (as Dr. Cave represents him, in his *Discourse of Ancient Church-Government*, p. 114.) was a young and daring Champion in the Popish Cause.

And so might *Martene* and *Goar* be for ought I know. But if I could give no Reason why Papists should maintain, that what they practice themselves was so lately introduc'd, yet since their Assertions are so apparently false, what they say in this Case is of no Weight.

The last Passage in my Sermon, which the Doctor says he read, was this, from p. 39. And if, upon Examination of your Consciences, you find your selves guilty of particular Sins, which may need a particular Repentance, you ought then to go to the Priest in private, and make a particular Confession, and desire a particular Absolution." He also read with it my Reference to the Exhortation to the Holy Communion, and observ'd to the House, that I had publish'd an Advertisement before another of my Sermons, Of the Honour of the Christian Priesthood: To set it in the true Light. "By which Words, I say, I understand some Persons think I would introduce *Auricular Confession*, which I am sure was ever very far from my Thoughts: For I meant no more by *particular Sins*, which might need a particular Repentance, than such Sins as ought to burden a Man's Conscience to that Degree, that he cannot quiet it without farther Comfort or Counsel, as it is express'd in the Exhortation to the Holy Communion, to which I there refer the Reader. And I should have printed that Passage in the very Words of that Exhortation, had I not been oblig'd to Print it as I Preach'd it." And here, Dr. Cannon says, he could not but observe a Want of Ingenuity, in drawing in the Reader to conclude, that at least in the Advertisement, I had express'd my self according to the Sense of the Church in the Exhortation, wherein the People are not mov'd

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*to apply to the Priest, on account of the Heinousness of their Sins (for even Blasphemy and Adultery, being confess'd to God, and repented of, are there supposed to be pardoned by God) but solely, in Case any one cannot quiet his Conscience; whereas the Doctor, says he, supposes some Sins ought so to burden a Man's Conscience, &c. And so indeed I do: But not for the Reason Dr. Cannon supposes, because some Sins are greater than others, for perhaps a Man may have less Occasion to seek further Comfort or Counsel, after the Commission of a great Sin, than of a less. He may heartily detest and abhor a great Sin as soon as he has committed it, and may resolve, by the Grace of God, to do no more so wickedly, and most earnestly and devoutly beg Pardon for it. But he may hug and cherish a less Sin, and think it no more than a venial Fault, which he may persuade himself God will wink at and take no Notice of. Now the least Sin ought to burthen a Man's Conscience as well as the greatest: And though he may have some Scruples about such a Sin, yet Men in these Cases are too apt to stifle and suppress those Checks of Conscience, and to go on presumptuously in the Commission of such Sins, 'till at last they persuade themselves that they are no Sins. And here I conceive Men may have Occasion for further Counsel howsoever they may be apt to think they need none. And therefore I say some Sins ought to burthen their Consciences, though perhaps they do not: And I put in the Word *ought* that Men might consider, whether they have really quieted their Consciences, or only stifled and suppress'd the Checks of Conscience; that so, upon a Re-examination, they might discover, if they did not need farther Comfort or Counsel.*

counsel, together with the Benefit of Absolution, for the real quieting their Consciences, which they had hitherto but stifled. And I leave the World to judge, if this be not agreeable to the Exhortation before the Communion.

These, I think, are all the Passages in my sermon, which Dr. Cannon has thought fit to acquaint the World, that he thinks to be very shocking: Some others he had mark'd in his own private Book, but for Reasons best known to himself, did not see Occasion to take any further Notice of them. And whether the passages he has produc'd are so shocking as he would represent them, I must leave others to judge: For my own part, till I see better Reasons than the Doctor has yet produced to the contrary, I think they contain true Doctrine, agreeable to the Scriptures, and the Liturgy and Homilies of our Church. As to his Quotations from *Morinus* and *Martene*, I have already consider'd and answer'd them. What he meant by so many Citations from the Councils of *Lataran*, *Trent*, &c. I know not, unless it was to satisfy the World that he had seen those Councils. Therefore I conceive I have nothing more to do, to give a full Answer to the Doctor, than to shew that our first Reformers did not leave the *authoritative Form of Absolution* in the Liturgy, for the Reason assign'd by him: But that they were of Opinion that *Sins were remitted by Absolution*.

The Doctor tells us, p. 14. *That he apprehends the only Reason, why our first Reformers left the authoritative Form of Absolution in the Liturgy, was, the Hope of bringing many superstitious persons to conform, who would have adhered to the discarded*

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discarded Popish Priests, if those of the established Church had been destitute of Power so to Absolve. And he adds, that *That this was the most he could say, in excuse of what our first Reformers did in this Matter.* So that it seems our first Reformers are not to be justified, for leaving this *Absolution* in the Liturgy, but only excused for complying with the Times, and considering rather, according to the modern Phrase, what was *seasonable*, than what was most agreeable to the Doctrine of the Gospel. But what shall we say to excuse those, who have let it stand in the Liturgy all this Time, when they have not wanted Opportunities to expunge it in so many Alterations of the Liturgy? What shall we say to defend those, who have given their Assent and Consent to it, so long after this Reason for the leaving it in the Liturgy, has ceased? What shall we say to excuse Dr. Cannon himself? Did he make an Exception to this *form of Absolution*, when he subscrib'd to the *Book of Common-Prayer*, as containing in it nothing contrary to the Word of God? But

I will now shew that our first Reformers had another Notion of *Absolution* than the Doctor will allow. They conceived that Sins were forgiven by it. This is expressly asserted in the Homily of *Common-Prayer and Sacraments*. Where to prove that *Absolution* is no Sacrament, there are these Words, *Although Absolution hath the Promise of forgiveness of Sins, yet by the express Word of the New Testament, it hath not this Promise annexed to the visible Sign, which is imposition of Hands; For this visible Sign* (I mean laying on of Hands) *is not expressly commanded in the New Testament to be used in Absolution.* Here is a positive Assertion of the Church, and Dr. Cannon himself has subscrib'd

it, that *Absolution* has the promise of forgiveness of Sins. Consequently, that the Church did not retain the authoritative Form of *Absolution*, to comply with the Humours of some superstitious People, *ut si populus velit decipi, decipiamur*, according to the Doctor's Notion, but because she judg'd it an Ordinance of God, and by Virtue of his Institution available to the Remission of Sins.

Further, to satisfy the World that our first Reformers were not of Dr. Cannon's Opinion, and did not leave the *authoritative* Form of *Absolution* in the Liturgy, for fear some superstitious Persons might otherwise adhere to the discarded Popish Priests, but that they put it there, because they look'd upon it to be appointed by *Christ* himself (though not as a Sacrament, because he did not annex thereto any outward visible Sign) yet as an Ordinance instituted for the Remission of Sins, I will shew what Archbishop Cranmer has said upon this Subject, because he had not only the greatest Hand in compiling the Liturgy, but was indeed the main Corrector and Supervisor of the whole Book, and nothing past without his Approbation. The Words I shall transcribe from him, are in his *Sermon of the Authority of the Keyes*. This excellent Sermon is in fol. p. ccxxxvi. of his Book, intitl'd CATECHISMUS, *That is to say, a short Instruction into Christian Religion, &c.* by the most Reverend Father in God, Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and Metropolitane. Gualterus Lynne Excudebat 1548. This was in the same Year wherein the Liturgy was first revised and published. And though it was revised again about two Years after, yet the Reformers were then so far from thinking, that

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they ought to abolish the Absolution, that they added a new Absolution to be used after Confession every Day, that so People might never come to Church, without receiving the Benefit of it: And the former more seemingly authoritative Absolution was also continued as before. So that Archbishop Cranmer, and our other Reformers. shewed themselves to have plainly the same Opinion of *Absolution*, when they compiled the second Liturgy, which they had when they composed the first. And what that was, I shall now shew in the Archbishop's own Words, as I transcribed them from his Sermon, lately re-published by the Reverend Dr. *Hickes*, in his excellent Preface to a Book intitled, *The Divine Right of Episcopacy asserted*. Printed for *Richard Sare* at *Gray's Inn Gate* in *Holbourn*, 1708. pag. xxxv.

' Now when a Man after Baptisme hath
' grievously synned, and doubteth in his Con-
' science whether he be in the favour of God
' or no (as oftentimes it happeneth) then
' is hard for him to trust to his awn bare Imag-
' inations, thinking on this fashion. I know
' that I have synned, but yet I am in this Op-
' nion, that God is not so cruel a Revenger.
' But that he hath forgiven me. For such a
' Opinion, without Goddes Word is not a true
' Faith, nor is able to stand in the daungerous
' Skirmishes of Temptation. But true Faith
' must ever be stayed upon the certain Word
' and Wourke of God. Now God dothe not
' speak to us, with a Voyce soundyng out of
' Heaven. But he hath given the Keyes of
' the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Authority
' to forgyve Synne to the Ministers of the
' Church. Wherefore let him that is a Synner
' go to one of them, let him knowlege and con-

Explain'd and Vindicated.

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confesse his Synne, and praye him, that according to God's Commaundemente, he wyll gyve him Absolution, and comforte him with the Worde of Grace, and Forgyveness of his Synnes.

And when the Minister dothe so, then I thought stedfastly to beleve, that my Synnes are truly forgyven me in Heaven. And such a saythe is able to stande stronge, in all Skyrmisses, and Assautes of our mortal Enemy the Devel; forasmuch as it is buylded upon a sure Rocke, that is to say, upon the certen Word and Worke of God. For he that is absolved, knoweth assuredly also, that the Minister hath Authority from God himself so to do. And thirdely, he knoweth, that God hath made this Promise to his Ministers, and sayed to them, To whom ye forgyve Synnes upon Earth, to hym also they shall be forgyven in Heaven. Wherefore, good Children, gyve good Eare to this Doctrine, and when your Synnes do make you affray'd and sadde, then seke and desyer Absolution and Forgyveness of your Sins of the Ministers, which have receiv'd a Commission and Commaundement from Christ hymself, to forgyve Men their Synnes, and then youre Consciences shall have Peace, Tranquillity, and Quietness. But he that dothe not obey this Counsel, but beyng ether blynd or proude, doth dyspyse the same, he shall not fynde Forgyveness of his Synnes, neither in hys awne good Wourkes, nor yet in painefull Chaastysements of his Bodye, or any other thyng, whereto God hath not promysed Remission of Synnes. Wherefore dyspyse not Absolution, for it is the Commaundemente and Ordinance of God, and the holy

'ly Spirit of God is present, and causeth these
 'things to take Effect in us, and to work
 'our Salvation. And this is the Meaning and
 'playne Understandyng of these Wordes of
 'Christe, which you hearde heretofore rehear-
 'sed, whiche are writen to thentent, that we
 'shoulde beleve, that whatsoever Goddes Mini-
 'sters do to us by Gods Commaundement
 'are as much availeable as yf God hymself
 'shoulde do the same. For whether the Mini-
 'sters do excommunicate open Malefactor
 'and unrepentant Persons, or do gyve Abso-
 'lution to those, which be truly repentant for
 'their Synnes, and amende their Lyves, these
 'Actes of the Ministers, have as great Power
 'and Authoritie, and be confirmed and rat-
 'fied in Heaven, as thoughe oure Lorde Jesu
 'Christe himself had done the same. Where-
 'fore good Children, learn these thynges
 'dilygentlye. And when you be asked, How
 'understande you the Wordes before rehearsed
 'ye shall answer, I do beleve that whatso-
 'ever the Ministers of Christ do to us by Gods
 'Commaundement, either in excommunicat-
 'inge open and unrepentante Synners, or in
 'absolving repentant Persons, all these the-
 'actes be of as great Authoritie, and as surely
 'confirm'd in Heaven, as yf Christ shoulde
 'speak the Wordes out of Heaven.

'So ye have good Children, the Begyn-
 'ning and Foundation, of the Ministers of
 'Gods Worde, and of the Authoritie of the
 'Kayes, as our Lord Jesus Christ did first or-
 'deyne and institute the same. The which our
 'Saviour Christ did institute and appointe for
 'this Purpose, That our Consciences myght
 'thereby be comforted, and assured of the For-
 'gyveness of Synnes, and to have the inest-
 'mable

able Treasures of the Gospel, as often as we have need thereof. That we, thereby being made stronge in our Faith, might so continue to thende of our Life.

Now if Archbishop *Cranmer*, who was the principal Compiler of the Liturgy, had judg'd (as Dr. *Cannon* fancies he did) that *Absolution* is of no Use or Effect, but only might be reserv'd in the Church, to please the Humours of some superstitious Persons, he would not himself have taken so much Pains to persuade People, that *Absolution* was such a Sacred, divine Ordinance, so very necessary and beneficial, as he sets it forth to be in his Sermon, which Sermon, if the Doctor will be pleas'd to read over, I doubt not, but besides what I have here transcrib'd, he will find at least as shocking Passages (I mean shocking to him and his Notions) as any he has collected out of mine.

But to satisfy him that the Doctrine I teach'd, was not only the Doctrine of our Reformerers, but of the Church, from that time downwards to our own Times, I will add to what I have already cited from the Book of Homilies and Archbishop *Cranmer*, some Testimonies of the succeeding Fathers of our Church.

Bishop *Andrews*, in his Sermon on this Text, *Mat. xx. 23.* speaks thus, "The Remission of Sin, as it is from God only; so it is by the Death and Blood-shedding of Christ alone: that, for the applying of this unto us, there are divers means establish'd — 1. In the Institution of Baptisme there is a Power to that end. Be Baptiz'd every one of you for the Remission of Sin (saith St. Peter to the three thousand on once) *Acts xi. 38.* Arise and be baptiz'd (saith

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(saith *Ananias* to *St. Paul*) and wash away the
 Sins. And, to be short: *I believe one Baptism*
 for the Remission of Sins (saith the *Nicene Creed*)
 2. Again there is also another Power for the
 Remission of Sins, in the Institution of the ho-
 ly Eucharist; the Words are exceeding plain
Mat. xxvi. 28. This is my Blood of the New Testa-
ment, for the Remission of Sins. 3. Besides,
 the Word it self, there is a like Power con-
 dain'd. *Now are you clean,* saith *Christ* (no
 Doubt from their Sins) *propter sermonem hunc*
Joh. xv. 3. And the very Name giveth
 much, that is intituled, *the Word of Reconcili-*
tion, 2 *Cor. v. 19.* 4. Further, there is to the
 same effect a Power in Prayer, and that
 the Priests Prayer; call for the Priests (saith the
 Apostle) and let them pray for the Sick Person
 and if he have committed Sin, it shall be forgiven
 him. All and every of these are Acts for the
 Remission of Sins; and in all and every of these,
 the Person of the Minister required, and they cannot
 be dispatched without him. But the Ceremonies
 and Circumstances that here I find used, pre-
 vail with me to think, that there is somewhat
 here imparted to them, that was not before.
 For it carrieth no Likelyhood, that our Saviour
 our bestowing on them nothing here, but
 that which before he had, would use so much
 Solemnity, so diverse and new Circumstances,
 no new or diverse Grace being here
 communicated: 1. Now for Baptism, it appea-
 reth plainly, *Joh. iv. 2.* that the Apostles were
 tiz'd in a Manner from the Beginning; which
 I make no Question they did not without
 Commission. 2. And for the Power of
 ministering the Holy Sacrament, it was granted
 expressly to them by *Hoc facite,* *Luc. xxii.*
 before his Passion. 3. The like may we

of the Power of *Preaching*, which was given long before, even when He sent them, and commanded them to preach the Kingdom of God, *Mat. x. 7. Luke ix. 2.* which was done before this Power was promised, which is here bestowed; as will evidently appear, the one being given, *Mat. x.* the other promised, *Mat. xvi. 4.* Neither can it be meant of Prayer. There is no Partition in Prayer. Prayers and Supplications are to be made for all Men, *1 Tim. ii. 2.* But here is a plain Partition. There is a *Quorum*, whose Sins are remitted, and another *Quorum* whose Sins are retained. Seeing then this new Ceremony, and solemn manner of proceeding in this, are able to persuade any, it was some new Power that here was conferred, and not those which before had been (though there be that apply this, others to some one, others to all of them :) I take it to be a Power distinct from the former, and (not to hold you long) to be the Accomplishment of the Promise made, *Mat. xvi. 19.* of the *Power of the Keys*, which here in this Case and in these Words is fulfilled; and have therein for me the joint Consent of the *Fathers*, which being a different Power in it self, is that which we call the *Act* or *Benefit* of *Absolution*; in which (as in the rest) there is in due Time and Place of it an Use for the *Remission of Sins*. Whereunto our *Saviour Christ*, by his sending them, doth institute them, and give them the *Key of Authority*: And by breathing on them and inspiring them, doth enable them and give them the *Key of Knowledge*, to do it well; and having bestowed both these upon them as the *Stewards of his House*, doth last of all deliver them

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their Commission to do it, having so enabled them, and authorized them as before.

And in the Conclusion of this Sermon he says, ' And here I should speak something of the applying or Use of it: [*viz.* of the Power of Absolution] And to that End, even for Comfort, I will only point at four Things in the ending of it, all expressing the Efficacy of it in more than common manner. 1. The Order, in this; that *Remiseritis* standeth first, and *Remittuntur* second. It is St. Chrysostome's Note, that it beginneth on Earth, and Heaven followeth after. So that whereas in Prayer and in other Parts of Religion, it is, *sicut in cælo, sic in terrâ*; here it is, *sicut in terrâ sic in cælo. A terrâ judicandi principalem auctoritatem sumit cælum. Nam judex sedet in terra: Dominus sequitur servum, & quicquid hic in inferioribus judicârit, hoc ille in supernis comprobât*, saith he. 2. The Time: In this, that it is *Remittuntur* in the Present Tense; there is no Delay betwixt, no deferring or holding in Suspence, but the Absolution pronounced upon Earth, *Remittuntur*, presently they are remitted; that he saith not, hereafter they shall be, but they are already remitted. 3. The Manner in setting down the two Words. For, it is so delivered by Christ, as if he were content should be accounted their Act, and that the Apostles were the Agents in it, and himself be the Patient, and suffer'd it to be done. For the Apostles Part is delivered in the Active (*Remiseritis*) and his own in the Passive (*Remittuntur*). 4. The Certainty: which is in the Identity of the Word, in not changing the Word, but keeping the self same in both Parts. For Christ hath not thus ended it, whose Sins ye wish, or ye pray for, or who

Sins ye declare to be *remitted* ; but *whose Sins ye remit* ; using no other Word in the *Apostle's* Part than he useth in his own. And to all these in St. *Matthew*, (*Mat. xviii. 18.*) He addeth his solemn Protestation of *verily, verily*, or *Amen, Amen*, that so it is, and shall be. And all to certify us, that he fully meaneth, with Effect to ratify in Heaven that is done on Earth, to the sure and steadfast Comfort of them that shall partake it.'

Bishop Hall in his third Volume, containing Cases of Conscience, p. 838. has these Words. ' If Man or Angel shall challenge to himself this *absolute Power* to forgive Sins, let him be accursed, yet withal it must be yielded, that the blessed Son of God spake not those Words of his last Commission in vain, *Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: And whose soever Sins ye retain, they are retained*, Joh. xx. 23. Neither were they spoken to the present Apostles only, but in them to all their faithful Successors, to the end of the World. It cannot then but be granted, that there is some kind of Power left in the Hand of *Christ's* Ministers, both to remit and retain Sin: Neither is this Power given only to the Governors of the Church, in respect to the Censures to be inflicted or relaxed by them, but to all God's faithful Ministers, in relation to the Sins of Men: A Power not sovereign and absolute, but limited and ministerial, for either quieting the Conscience of the Penitent, or further aggravating the Conscience of Sin, or Terror of Judgment to the Obstinate and Rebellious. Neither is this only by way of bare verbal Declaration (which might proceed from any other Lips) but in the way of

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' an operative and effectual Application, by
 ' Virtue of that delegate or commissiſionary Au-
 ' thority, which is by *Christ* intruſted with
 ' them. For certainly our Saviour meant in
 ' theſe Words, to confer ſomewhat upon his
 ' Miniſters, more than the reſt of the World
 ' ſhould be capable to receive or perform:
 ' The Abſolution therefore of an authorized
 ' Perſon, muſt needs be of greater Force and
 ' Efficacy, than of any private Man, how
 ' learned or holy ſoever, ſince it is grounded
 ' upon the Inſtitution and Commiſſion of the
 ' of the Son of God, from which all Power
 ' and Virtue is derived to all his Ordinances.
 ' And we may well ſay, That whatſoever is
 ' in this Caſe done by God's Miniſter, (the
 ' Key not erring) is ratified in Heaven: It
 ' cannot therefore but be a great Comfort and
 ' Cordial Assurance to the penitent Soul, to
 ' hear the Meſſenger of God (after a careful
 ' Inquiſition into his Spiritual State, and true
 ' ſight of his Repentance) in the Name of the
 ' Lord *Jeſus*, pronouncing to him the full Re-
 ' miſſion of all his Sins: And if either the Bleſ-
 ' ſing or Curſe of a Father go deeper with us,
 ' than of any other whatſoever, although pro-
 ' ceeding from his own private Affection,
 ' without any warrant from above; how for-
 ' cibly ſhould we eſteem the (not ſo much pre-
 ' catory as declaratory) Benediction of our Spi-
 ' ritual Fathers, ſent to us out of Heaven.

I might and ſhould here alſo add a large
 Quotation from *Bishop Baily's Practice of Piety*
 in the Place where he ſhews, how *the ſick Per-
 ſon ought to ſend for ſome godly and religious Paſtor*
 but it is a Book ſo well known, and almoſt in
 every Family, that I ſhall only deſire the Rea-
 der to conſult the Book it ſelf in that Place
 Theſe

these three, Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Andrews, and Bishop Baily, I referred to in the Preface to my Sermon: And if Doctor Cannon had consulted them, before he made his Motions on this occasion, he would have found that all the *shocking Passages*, as he calls them, which he read out of my Sermon, are to be met with in these Venerable Authors. However, to shew that the Bishops of this Church, continu'd the same Opinion, with relation to Absolution, even to our own Times; I will produce one Citation more, which shall be from Bishop Sparrow, who died not till the Year 1685. but a few Years before the Revolution. In his Sermon on *Confession of Sins, and the Power of Absolution*. Reprinted by Sam. Keble at the Turk's Head in Fleetstreet, 1704 pag. 14. After having shewed the absolute necessity of Confession to God, he has these Words.

' But there is another Confessor that would not be neglected. *Qui confiteri vult, ut inveniat gratiam, quærat sacerdotem, scientem solvere & ligare*, saith St. Augustine: He that would be sure of Pardon, let him seek out a Priest, and make his humble Confession to him; for God, who alone hath the prime and original Right of forgiving Sins, hath delegated the Priests his Judges here on Earth, and given them the Power of Absolution, so that they can in his Name forgive the Sins of those that humbly confess unto them. But is not this *Blasphemy*, said the Scribes once? Is it not *Popery* say some with us now? Take the Counsel that is given in *Job*, cap. viii. ver. 8. *Enquire of the former Generations, ask the Fathers, and they shall tell thee*. Ask then St. Chrysostome, and hear what he saith in his fifth Homily, upon these Words of *Isaiab*, *I saw the Lord*
C 4
sitting

sitting upon a Throne. What is comparable
 (saith he) to the Power of the Priest,
 whom Christ hath said, *Whatsoever ye shall*
bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven,
whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth shall be loosed
Heaven? ἄπό τῆ γῆς τῆ ἀρχῆς τῆ κρείσσεως λαμβάνει
 ἡγεμόνος, ἐπειδὴν ὁ κρείσσος ἐν τῇ γῇ καθύπαι, ὁ δεσπότης ἐν
 τοῦ δελφῶ, ἢ ἀπὲρ ἂν ἔτος κατὰ κείναι, ταῦτα ὁ κύριος
 κρείσσει. Heaven waits and expects the Priest's
 Sentence here on Earth, the Lord follows
 the Servant, and what the Servant binds on
 Earth, *clave non errante*, that the
 Lord confirms in Heaven: Words so clear
 for the judiciary formal Absolution of the
 Priest; as nothing can be said more plain.
 Please you next to enquire of St. *Jerome*, who
 is said to be the Patron of that Opinion, that
 holds the Priest's Power barely declarative
 and so indeed none at all: Yet he speaks
 home, in his Epistle, *ad Heliodorum de vitâ se-*
culariâ. God forbid, saith he, that I should
 speak a Word amiss against the Priests, *Quod*
sacro ore Corpus Christi conficiunt, that is in the
 holy Eucharist; *per quos nos Christiani sumus*
 that is in Baptism: *Qui claves Regni celorum*
habentes, quodammodo ante diem judicii judicant
 that is by remitting or retaining Sins. He
 that can construe *judicant*, and understand
 what it signifies, needs no Comment upon
 the Words. Hear next what St. *Gregory the*
Great says, in his 26th Homily upon the Gospel
 of *spels*, *Apostoli principatum supremi judicii sortian-*
tur, ut vice Dei quibusdam peccata retineant, qui-
busdam relaxent; The Apostles, and in them
 all Priests were made God's Vicegerents here
 on Earth, in his Name to retain and forgive
 Sins, not *declaratively* only, but *judicially*.
Animarum judices fiunt, as he goes on, they

are made the Judges of the Souls of Men, casting the Obstinate down to the Gates of Hell, by the fearful Power of Excommunication, and lifting the Penitent into Heaven, by the blessed Power of Absolution. And he is no better than a *Novatian*, that denies it, says St. *Ambrose*. I could name more Fathers, as St. *Augustine*, St. *Cyprian*, and others, but I spare. These I have named, are enough to give Testimony of the former Generation, Men too pious to be thought to speak *Blasphemy*, and too ancient to be suspected of *Popery*. But to put all out of doubt, let's search the Scriptures; look into St. *John* xx. v. 23. *Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever Sins ye retain, they are retained*: Here is a plain Power of remitting Sins granted to the Priest, by our blessed Saviour. Nor can it be understood of remitting Sins by *preaching*, as some expound it, nor by *baptizing*, as others guess. For both these, *preach* and *baptize*, they could do long before: But this Power of remitting they received not till now, that is, after his Resurrection.——As appears first by the Ceremony of *Breathing*, by that signifying that then he infused that Power into them, which he bid them receive. And Secondly, by the Word *Receive*, which he could not properly use, if they had been indued with it before. So then it is not the Power of preaching and baptizing, which is here given the Apostles, but as the Fathers interpret the Place, a peculiar Power of pronouncing, as God's deputed Judges, Pardon and Remission to the Penitent, a Power of absolving from Sins, in the Name of God,

all

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' all such as penitently confess unto them
 ' A Form of which Absolution our Holy Mo-
 ' ther the Church, hath prescribed in the Vi-
 ' sitation of the Sick. He then that assents to
 ' the Church of *England*, or believes the Scrip-
 ' tures, or gives Credit to the ancient Fathers
 ' cannot deny the Priests the Power of remitt-
 ' ing Sins.—— *Pœnitentiam igitur agite qualiter
 ' agitur in Ecclesiâ*, confess as the Church di-
 ' rects us, confess to God, confess also to the
 ' Priest, if not in private, in the Ear, since
 ' that is out of use, yet however confess as the
 ' Church appoints, publickly before the Con-
 ' gregation, that so we may at least by this
 ' reap the great Benefit of Absolution. And
 ' if we slight this, hear what St. *Augustine* says
 ' Tom. 10. Hom. 49. *Nemo sibi dicat, occulte
 ' ago, quia apud Deum ago, &c.* Let no Man
 ' flatter himself, and say, *I confess in private to
 ' God*, and God that knows my Heart will
 ' pardon me, tho' I never at all confess unto
 ' the Priest, *Ergo sine causâ dictum esset, quia
 ' veritis in terrâ, &c?* Hath God in vain said
 ' *Whose Sins ye remit, they are remitted?* Hath
 ' God in vain given the Priest the Power of
 ' the Keys? *Frustramus ergo verbum Dei?* Shall
 ' we by our wilful Neglect, go about to make
 ' void the Promise of Christ? God forbid!

I shall not burthen the Reader with more
 Quotations of this Kind, I hope these may be
 sufficient to satisfy him, that our first Reformers
 did not retain the *authoritative* Form of
Absolution in the Liturgy, in hopes of bringing
many superstitious Persons to conform, nor did any
 of these great Men think as he does, that this
was the most could be said in excuse for it. They
 were so far from thinking that it needed any
 Excuse, that they preached up *authoritative* *Absolution*

ion, with Zeal and Earnestness, as a Do-
ne of *Jesus Christ*, which was always re-
ved and retained in the Church.

But notwithstanding our Reformers have so
tively declared in the *Homily* above cited,
Absolution has the Promise of forgiveness of
; and Dr. Cannon himself has subscrib'd to
as a Doctrine agreeable to the Scriptures;
withstanding Archbishop *Cranmer*, the chief
our Reformers, and who was the main Di-
tor and Supervisor of the Liturgy, when it
s compiled, and afterwards when it was re-
ed, says, *That when the Minister, according*
God's Commandment, gives me Absolution, then
I ought stedfastly to believe, that my Sins are truly
given me in Heaven: And that such Faith is
to stand strong, in all Skirmishes and Assaults of
my mortal Enemy the Devil, forasmuch as it is built
upon a sure Rock, that is to say, upon the sure Word
and Work of God, yet Dr. Cannon has the Confi-
dence to tell us, that they sufficiently declared it
to be their Opinion, *That the Absolution of the*
Minister is of no avail toward the Pardon of Sin. Would
not he have become a Man of the Doctor's Sta-
tion and Character, to have made some bet-
ter Enquiry into the Opinions of our first Re-
formers in this Point, before he had so pe-
nemptorily made this Assertion? Would not a
Man of common Prudence and Honesty have
enquir'd into the Doctrines, himself had sub-
scrib'd to before he had printed such a Positi-
on? But it seems he subscrib'd he knew not
what. And after so many Subscriptions as he
made to the Book of Homilies, declaring,
That it doth contain a godly and wholesome Doctrine,
and necessary for these Times, he has publish'd,
that is directly contrary to the express Doctrine
contained in that Book. For whereas the
Book

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Book says, That *Absolution* has the Promise of forgiveness of Sins, and by the Words following, where it speaks of imposition of Hands, plainly shews, that it means the *Absolution* of the Priest; yet the Doctor asserts, and asserts the Doctrine of our Church, That the *Absolution* of the Priest is of no avail toward the pardon of Sins.

But let us see the Grounds on which the Doctor founds this Assertion; and see if he had not at least some plausible Reasons for it. Having therefore transcrib'd the Exhortation to the *Holy Communion*, as he says, it stands in the first Book of K. Edw. VI. The Conclusion of which (except what he says, following, *the satisfaction of scrupulous Minds*, which he therefore puts in the Postscript to his Book, and makes no Inferences from) is this. That if we be impenitent, Neither the *Absolution* of the Priest doth any thing avail us, nor the receiving of this Holy Sacrament, doth any thing but increase our Damnation. Upon which he observes, we have now seen all the Ways and Means of becoming worthy Receivers of this Holy Sacrament, whereby we are ascertained that we have obtained remission of our Sins; And neither the *Absolution* of a Priest, nor Confession of Sins to a Priest, is to be found among them. Therefore our first Reformers thought neither of them of any avail toward the pardon of Sins. He might as well have observed, that the receiving of the Holy Sacrament was not amongst the Ways and Means prescribed for the obtaining remission of Sins, and therefore that our first Reformers thought not that the Holy Sacrament was of any avail toward the remission of Sins. The Exhortation was intended to shew them how they were to prepare and qualify themselves to receive the Holy Sacrament, and the *Absolution* of the Priest, which then as well as now always preceded it. This was not the Intent in this Exhortation, therefore

There was no occasion to have mention'd the Absolution of the Priest, together with the Holy Sacrament, in the conclusion of the Exhortation.

And to what End was it said, that *neither Absolution of the Priest can avail us any thing*, if we be impenitent, unless they had supposed it to avail something to the Penitent? The very saying that it did *not avail* in one case, is a strong Proof that they conceived it to *avail* in the other. So that the very Argument Dr. Can- ton brings to maintain his Assertion, is indeed a forcible Argument against it.

But he says further, *In the Rubrick, before the Absolution, in the Visitation of the Sick, it is order'd, That the same Form should be used in all private Confessions; but that Order was left out in the second Book. And so were all those Passages in the Exhortation before the Holy Communion, which mention any confessing of Sins to a Priest, or intend to suppose any sacerdotal Absolution: So that throughout the whole Book, there is no mention of confessing Sins to a Priest; nor of a Priest's absolving, except once in the Visitation of the Sick.* As to what relates to *confessing Sins to a Priest*, I shall have occasion to speak of it a little time, and to shew what I conceive to be the Opinion of our Church in that Matter. But at present I shall keep to the Point of Absolution. Now in this 2d Book of *Edw. VI.* there was a Form of Absolution (as well as of Confession) drawn up to be used every Day at the beginning of Morning and Evening Service. And when there was another Form of Absolution appointed, it might not be thought so convenient to tie the Minister up to the old Form, in the case of *all private Confessions*, as before the new Form was establish'd. And by leaving out that Order in the second Book, it seems plainly to be intended, that the

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the Minister in Case of *private Absolution*,
 fired by a Person in his Health, and in no
 sent danger of Death, might absolve him
 any of the prescribed Forms he should thin
 convenient. For indeed, there is no materi
 Difference in the three Forms of Absolutio
 and though that in the Office for *visiting the Sick*
 seems more *authoritative* than either of t
 other two, yet indeed it is not. Where is t
 Difference between saying, *by the Authority*
which Jesus Christ has committed to me, I absolve
thee, as in the Visitation of the Sick; and *Almigh*
ty God, who has given me his Minister Power
Commandment, to declare and pronounce to the Pen
itent the Absolution and Remission of Sins, he
doneth and absolveth, as in the daily Office?
 we not in both these *Absolutions* declare, th
 the Pardon is God's Pardon, and that we
 only as God's Ministers, commission'd by h
 to pronounce it? In one we acquaint the P
 nitent, that God pardons him by our Mi
 stry, and in the other, that we absolve him
 God's Name, and by his Authority, meerly
 Ministers commission'd by him for that P
 pose: That although we pronounce
 Words, we do it but as Servants acting in
 Master's Name. Neither is the other *Abso*
tion in the Communion Service less *authoritative*
 than the other two. It is, I know, comm
 ly call'd a *Precatory Form*, and is said by so
 to be meerly *Optative*, and no more than
 bare Prayer for Pardon and Forgiveness.
 it is plainly more than so, and ought to
 call'd a *Benedictory Form*, *Precatory* indeed, w
 Respect to God, but *Authoritative* with
 spect to the People. A Prayer it is, but
 in the Name of the People, but offered by
 Priest alone for the People. A Prayer to G

a *Benedictory Absolution* to them. For if God will pardon those who are truly Penitent, and humbly receive this Pardon from those whom he has appointed to pronounce and declare it, it matters not in what Form they pronounce it, whether *Precatory, Declarative, or Indicative*; because the Pardon depends not on the *Form*, since *Christ* himself has prescrib'd one, but on the *Authority* vested in the *Priest* by his *Commission*. And the *Priest* plainly shews his *Authority* in the Use of this very Form, by uttering it in his own Name, and not in the Name of the Congregation, as all other Prayers are made, and doing this also, standing as God's Ambassador, and pronouncing it to them kneeling, who receive it as the blessing of Pardon and strengthening Grace. Since then both the Authority and Effect of Absolution, as it concerns the Agent, depends upon the *Commission*, and not on any *Form* of Words, the Church in private Cases might very well leave the *Priest* at liberty, to use which of the Forms he should think fit, *mutatis mutandis*, with regard to a private Person and a Congregation. Therefore the Church by not tying up the *Priest* to use in all private Absolutions the Form prescribed in the Office for visiting the Sick, gave no manner of Reason to persuade us that our Reformers chang'd their Opinions, and upon the Edition of the second Book, judg'd *Absolution* to be of no Avail for the remission of Sins; but on the contrary, the making a new Form to be used in the daily Service of the Church, was an Argument that they thought *Absolution* (if not absolutely necessary, yet) most highly expedient for remission of Sins, since thereby they took care that no Person truly penitent, should ever want the Benefit of it. And it is

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now given to all the Penitent immediately upon the humble Confession of their Sins. Since therefore every Man who frequents the Church with that Penitence, Devotion and Humility, which he ought to do, does at those Times receive the Benefit of Absolution the Church had no occasion to exhort Men otherwise than upon Scruples for their more particular Satisfaction, to desire or seek for *particular Absolution*, since if they are truly Penitent, they may receive it daily, or at least weekly in the Congregation. But because at time of Sicknes, Men are apt to be more scrupulous and fearful than in their Health, and many Men may have reason to fear, that though they have frequented the Church, they have not there received the Benefit of the *daily Absolution*, for want of that true Penitence which should qualify them for that Benefit, therefore the Church has provided a more *particular Absolution* (not really, though seeming more *Authoritative* than the other) to be pronounced at that time, if humbly and heartily desired. And the Church has here left the Sick Person to his own Discretion, whether he will desire it, not because she conceives that the *Absolution of the Priest of no Avail for Pardon of Sins*; but because she conceives there is no Person living within her Communion, who does not frequent the Daily Service, and has not there duly received the *Absolution* appointed in that Service: And who has not also duly received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and been there also Absolved, as is appointed likewise in that Office. And if the Sick Person receives that Holy Sacrament, he also will receive the Absolution appointed to be given with it. Since therefore the Church has tak

in such Care, that no one should either live
dye without the *Absolution of the Priest*, she
ought well leave Persons to their own Discre-
tion, whether they would desire to be Absolv'd
in a more particular manner.

Forasmuch therefore as the Church has ta-
ken such particular Care, that none who are
truly penitent may want the *Absolution* of the
Priest, it is strange that a Dignitary of this
Church should declare it to be her Opinion,
that the *Absolution of the Priest is of no Avail for
the Pardon of Sin*, because she has not now pre-
scrib'd one particular Form for all private Ca-
ses, but left the Minister to his Discretion, to
use which of her Forms he thinks convenient.
But what is yet more strange is, That the Do-
ctor should have the Confidence to affirm *that
throughout the whole Book [viz. the Book of com-
mon Prayer] there is no Mention any where of con-
fessing Sins to a Priest; nor of the Priests Absolving,
except once in the Visitation of the Sick.* As to the
point of Confession, I will treat of it by it
self at the Conclusion of this Paper. But for
any Man to say *there is nothing of the Priests Absol-
ving*, in the whole Book of Common Prayer,
except once in the Visitation of the Sick, is such an
assertion which no modest Man would make.
For in the Beginning both of *Morning and E-
vening Prayer*, immediately after the *Confession*,
follows, *The Absolution or Remission of Sins*, to
be pronounc'd by the *Priest alone standing; the
people still kneeling.* Likewise immediately af-
ter the Confession in the Communion Service,
shall the *Priest*, (or the *Bishop*, being pre-
sent) stand up, and turning himself to the People,
pronounce this *Absolution.* And if the Doctor
pretends that he means *private Absolution*, I
think he ought to have told us so: For his

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Argument is general, and his Assertion too equally affects all kind of *Absolution* by a Priest. And I believe no one will say, but if the Priest can absolve the Penitent in Publick, he may do it in Private also. However the Church mentions the *Priests absolving* in private, when in the Exhortation to the Holy Communion it gives this Direction, *If there be any of you who by this means cannot quiet his own Conscience herein but requireth further Comfort or Counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his Grief, that by the Ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the Benefit of Absolution, together with ghostly Counsell and Advice, to the quieting of the Conscience, and avoiding of all Scruple and Doubtfulness.* Here the Person is requir'd to apply to some discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, not only for Counsel, but for the Benefit of *Absolution* he is to receive the Benefit of *Absolution* from him and yet the Doctor says, *there is no mention of the Priests Absolving* in this Case. What, is the Person to receive the Benefit of *Absolution* from the Priest, and yet is not the Priest to absolve him if it be convenient? But, says the Doctor, *a discreet Parish Priest may, by the right Application of God's Word, administer not only Comfort, but the Benefit of Absolution also, without using any Form of Absolving.* That is he may give him the Benefit of *Absolution* without giving him *Absolution* at all? This is something extraordinary, let us therefore examine how this is to be done. The Doctor says, *Such a Minister may from the Word of God, assure and satisfy the Penitent, that he certainly has the Benefit of Absolution.* And that this was the Intention of the Compilers of this Second Book, I am the more satisfied, by observing, that in this very Book, they

prefer

scribed a Way and Form of doing it. For where-
in the first Book the Morning and Evening Pray-
began with the Lord's Prayer; In the second, be-
that Prayer, first a Sentence of Scripture was
lered to be read; next an Exhortation to confession
Sins before God, then a general Confession. After
which, the Absolution, as it is call'd, was to
pronounc'd by the Minister alone; which
to declare to the People from God's Word, that he
gives the Conversion and Eternal Happiness of a
manner; that as he pardoneth and absolveth all true
penitents, who believe his Gospel so he has given
power and Commandment to his Ministers, to de-
clare and pronounce to them the Absolution and Re-
mission of their Sins. The Case then it seems is
this, what the Church calls Absolution the Do-
ctor will have to be no Absolution, for he styles
the Absolution as it is call'd, plainly intima-
ting thereby that it is indeed no Absolution, but
meer Form, as he says, by which a Minister
may from the Word of God assure and satisfy the Pe-
nitent, that he has the Benefit of God's Absolution,
which implies, as if it might be pronounc'd
by any other Man as well as a Priest. But
which are to be guided by in this Case, the
Doctor or the Rubrick? The Rubrick styles it
the Absolution, and the Doctor, as well as my
self, and the rest of the Clergy, has subscrib'd
to the Rubrick: And I cannot think but that
ought to look upon it to be as the Rubrick
calls it, notwithstanding the Doctor's Judg-
ment: And having laid down my Reasons for
it, shall leave the Reader to judge

Now by Absolution, as given by Man, I un-
derstand a Power which God has committed to a
certain Order of Men, whom we call Priests, to
declare and pronounce Remission of Sins, to the Peni-
tent in his Name, which Declaration and Pronunci-
ation is effectual to the Remission of Sins, Christ ha-

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ving promised, that *whosoever Sins they remit, they are remitted.* For since the Priest acts but by Commission, that is by a delegated Power, in this Case, he cannot pardon in his own Name but in God's Name only. The Pardon is God's, and the Priests part is to declare and pronounce it, and what he doeth thus declare and pronounce *clave non errante*, God has promised to ratify and confirm. Therefore as I said in my Sermon, p. 38. *It is not the Man that forgives, it is not the Man that pardons you, but God himself does it by the Ministry of his Priest, who is the Ambassador for Christ, and appointed in Christ's stead to reconcile you to God,* 2 Cor. v. 20. The Form prescrib'd in our daily Office is exactly agreeable to this, and is therefore as full and compleat an *Absolution* as any we contend for. Here the Priest first declares God's good Will towards Sinners, and his Readiness to receive them upon their Repentance and Amendment, saying, *Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he may turn from his Wickedness and live.* Then he sheweth the Authority he has committed to his Priests, and to assure the Penitent of his Pardon: *And because he hath given Power and Commandment to his Ministers to declare, and pronounce to his People being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins.* Having thus declar'd God's good Will, and the Power committed to him as his Minister; he then proceeds by Virtue of this Power and Authority, to declare and pronounce God's Pardon saying, *He [that is God] pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Holy Gospel.* This is the *Absolution*; and what soever Dr. Cannon may think of it, is as full and as *Indicative*, as that Form in the Visitation of the Sick, which so much offends him. The

only this Difference, that this *Absolution* being appointed to be pronounced to a mixed Congregation, where many Persons may be present who are not truly *penitent*, it was necessary to word it in such manner as all might understand, that the *Impenitent* and *Unfaithful* were not absolved, nor receiv'd any Benefit thereby: But that such as were truly *penitent* and *faithful* having sincerely and heartily acknowledged and bewail'd their Sins in the foregoing Confession, were actually pardoned by God himself, and that he, as God's Deputy, did pronounce their Pardon. For to what other purpose does the Priest, before he pronounces the *Absolution*, declare and assert his Authority, as committed to him by Almighty God for that End? Are those Words, *he has given Power and Commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his People, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins*, put into the Form for no Intent or Design? Undoubtedly they are used to shew the People the Priest's Power and Authority in this Case: And that God sends them their Pardon by him, as his particular Messenger or Ambassador, sent to them for that purpose; and that by Vertue of this Commission he declares and pronounces God's Pardon to the Faithful and Penitent. Accordingly he uses plain *Indicative* Words, and in the *present Tense*. He doth not say, *God hath promised you Pardon upon your Repen-* tance, or *God will pardon you, hereafter if you do as* you ought to do, or the like, but he actually pronounces God's present Pardon: *He pardoneth and absolveth*, that is, He actually grants his Pardon at this very Time that it is pronounc'd by me his Deputy, *to all them*, that is, to every one of you that do [now] truly repent, and un-

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feignedly believe his holy Gospel. And if this *Absolution* should be given to a single Person (as Dr. Cannon supposes it was intended, it should be, when Application was made to the Priest for that Purpose) the Form being put into the Singular Number on that Occasion, must run thus: *He [that is God] pardoneth and absolveth thee who dost [or if thou dost] truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.* What does the Priest do more, or how does he pretend, or make Shew of greater Authority, when he says, *by his [viz. Christ's] Authority committed unto me, I absolve thee?* In both Forms he shews that the Pardon comes from God, that he only pronounces it as his Deputy, and by a Commission derived from him. And in both of them he declares and asserts the Power by which he acts, and pronounces the Absolution with Authority, standing in the Place of God, as his Ambassador, whilst the Penitent kneels (or, if Sick, lies) in a most humble Posture to receive his Pardon. If the Church conceiv'd this Form in the Daily Service, to be no more than a Declaration of God's good Will and Readiness to pardon Sinners, as the Doctor and some others seem to expound it, the People might stand up or sit down to hear it read, as at a Sermon, where there is frequently as much said by way of Declaration as they seem to allow in this Form. But the Church, by appointing the Priest to stand and the People to kneel at the pronouncing of this Form, plainly shews, that she really esteems it to be, as she calls it, and I conceive have prov'd it, an *Absolution*, by which the faithful and devout Penitent does receive the Remission of his Sins; that being qualified for Pardon by his Faith and Repentance, he acts

receives a Pardon by this Ministry of the
 But the Doctor is not only offended with
 Form of *Absolution*, in the Office for *Visi-*
the Sick, as if it was more *Authoritative* than
 agreeable to *Christ's* Institution, though it be
 need no more *Authoritative* than that Form
 seems so much to approve, because he con-
 veyes it to be no *Absolution*, notwithstanding
 the Rubrick expressly calls it so, and I think I
 have prov'd it as full and Authoritative as the
 other: He is as much displeas'd with the very
 words of our *Ordination*. And it is plain, from
 the whole Scope of what he has Printed con-
 cerning his *two Motions*, that he is as much offen-
 ded with the *Liturgy* it self as with my Sermon,
 and would persuade us, that our *Reformers* put
 some Things into the Book of *Common Prayer*,
 which themselves did not really approve: And
 that they required Subscription from all Mini-
 sters to what themselves thought *Popish*, that is,
 corruptions introduc'd by the Church of *Rome*,
 contrary to the Doctrine of the Scriptures and
 of the Primitive Church. So that it is no Won-
 der if the *Lower House of Convocation* did not ap-
 prove his Motion, which reflected so highly
 on the Honour of our first Reformers, and of
 the Church it self.

He tells us, p 30. that *the Use of the Words*,
receivē ye the Holy Ghost, &c. in the Ordaining
priests, took much the same Course, viz. with the
Form of Absolution, still retain'd in the Office
 for *visiting the Sick*, that is, they were intro-
 duc'd by some Bishops about the thirteenth
 Century, or later; and the Council of *Trent*
was the first Council that declared them essential to
the Ordination of a Priest. Yet, he says, *they*
stand in our Book, as if they were thought Essen-

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tial Words, being retain'd as before in the Romish Pontifical. So that, according to him, our Church still uses them as Essential Words, and yet they are Words never us'd in Ordination till the thirteenth Century (as he positively says, p. 19.) before which time, the erroneous Doctrines and Practices which our Church condemns in the Church of Rome had prevail'd. The Consequence of which is, That our Church here retains an Erroneous Doctrine and Practice which she herself condemns. And to shew that she does not approve this Form of Ordination, though she retains it, he observes that in all the foregoing Parts of the Office, even where the whole Duty of the Priest seems to be declared, no mention is made of forgiving or retaining Sins. But does not the Person to be Ordain'd promise in the foregoing Part of the Office, to Minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and this Church and Realm receiv'd the same? And is not Remission of Sins by the Priest a Part of this Doctrine? It is the Doctrine of our Church, receiv'd and established by the Laws of the Realm, and Dr. Compton himself has subscrib'd to it, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath left Power to his Church, to absolve all Sinners who truly repent and believe in him; as in the Office for Visiting the Sick: That Almighty God hath given Power and Commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his People being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins; as in the Daily Service: And in the Homily, as I have already shewed, it is declared, that Sins are remitted by such Absolution. This being therefore a Doctrine of the Church so fully declared in the Liturgy, and one of the Homilies, there was no more Occasion to mention it particularly, in the foregoing Part

the Office, than to mention the other Doctrines of the Church: And he might as well say, a *Priest* is not oblig'd to believe the *Creed*, because it is not mentioned in the foregoing part of the Office, as to say he has *no Authority* to remit Sins for that Reason.

However, it is sufficient to satisfy us of the Opinion of the Church in this Matter, that she has retained these Words, *Receive the Holy Ghost; whosoever Sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, &c.* And I cannot persuade my self, that they were retain'd, because they were found in the *Romish Pontifical*, but because they were found in the *Holy Scriptures*, according to which our Reformers took Care to correct the *Pontifical*. But Dr. Cannon has found them in the *Pontifical*, and seems as if he had a Mind to forget, that they are also in the *New Testament*. Whether these Words were always us'd at the Ordination of a *Priest*, is what I have not Opportunity to enquire, for Want of Books: And I am of Opinion, that the Doctor may be as much mistaken in this Matter, when he was in the *Authoritative, Indicative Form of Absolution*, which I have prov'd to be at least four hundred Years Elder, than the Time he was assign'd for the Introduction of it: Nay, that some such *Indicative Form* was us'd by the Apostles themselves; since St. Paul so positively says, that he *Forgave* (not barely declared, promised, or prayed for Forgiveness) *in the Person of Christ*. So as to the Form of Ordination, this was the Form used by our Saviour, when he sent his Apostles; and whether the Apostles used not the same Form in sending others, is more than Dr. Cannon can prove; nor can he say, upon sure Ground, about what Time it was first brought into the stated Forms for

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for Ordination. But whether this Form of Words was used or not, it is certain Priests were always look'd upon to be vested with the Authority supposed to be convey'd by this Form. They were conceiv'd to have receiv'd the Holy Ghost, together with the Power to remit and retain Sins. Therefore St. Ambrose says, *Specta etiam illud, quoniam qui spiritum sanctum accipit, et solvendi peccati potestatem & ligandi accipit. Scilicet enim scriptum est, Accipite spiritum sanctum, quorum remiseritis peccata, remittuntur: & quorum retinueritis detenta erunt: ergo qui solvere non potest peccatum, non habet spiritum sanctum. Munus spiritus sancti est OFFICIUM SACERDOTIS, jus auctoritatem spiritus sancti in solvendis ligandisque criminibus est.* Observe this, because he that receiveth the Holy Ghost, receiveth the Power of binding and loosing. For so it is written, whose soever Sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever Sins ye retain, they are retained: Therefore he that cannot loose Sin has not the Holy Ghost. The Gift of the Holy Ghost is the Priest's Office, and the Power of the Holy Ghost consists in the loosing and binding Sins. *Ambr. de Penitent. lib. i. c. 2.* This Holy Father here speaks the Sense of the Church, in Opposition to the Novatians, who did then as Dr. Cannon does now, deny that the Priests had any such Power. But our Church plainly allows the Authority of the Priest in this Point, and expressly confers it in her Form of Ordination: And has better Grounds for this than the Roman Pontifical, even the Holy Scriptures, and the Sense of the Primitive Church, which acknowledg'd this Power to be vested in the Priest by virtue of his Office. But this Doctor was so zealous to get my Sermon censur'd, that he cared not what Reflections he cast on the Church itself, so he could but get

Doctrine I had preach'd to be condemn'd Popery.

I shall now consider what the Doctor says about Confession, and then take Notice of his Conclusion. He says, p. 35. *The Rubrick in the Institution of the Sick, by making a special Confession, if he feel his Conscience troubled with any weighty Matter, seems to require the confession of the particular Sin that troubles; yet even here is nothing of private or auricular Confession. The general Confessions in other Parts of this Book, are certainly directed to be made only to Almighty God — and I profess I cannot discern Reason enough for thinking, that this was intended to be made to any other than Almighty God; or that more was meant in this: If the Sick was troubled in Mind, on account of any great Sin or Sins, he should then make a special Confession to God, &c. Weighty Sins will be allowed to require a particular Confession, and the omission to be seasonable.* By this extraordinary Exposition of the Rubrick, the Doctor, I suppose, whose fancies he has clearly made out what he says before, p. 33. so boldly asserts, that in the whole Book there is no Mention any where of confessing Sins to a Priest. Now I confess it is at the Sick Man's Discretion, whether this Confession of Sins shall be private or not: He may confess to the Priest alone, or he may call in all his Friends and Neighbours, to hear what he has to say, I know no Body will hinder him. But I believe most Men in such Case will choose to do it in private. But surely the Church, by this special Confession, cannot suppose only an inward mental Confession to be known only to God. The general Confessions, which the Doctor speaks of, though made only to God, are made openly, in the Presence and Hearing of the Priest: And if the Penitent be dispos'd

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dispos'd to direct this special Confession to God, so it be in the Hearing of the Priest, have nothing to say against it: But certainly the Church intended, that he should discover to the Priest the Matter that troubled him: And whether that be done by directing his Confession to God, or to the Priest, is not material. For if he expects Comfort or Counsel from the Priest, it is necessary that the Priest hear his Confession, and be made acquainted with the Cause of his Trouble, or he cannot help him. That he is bound to confess the particular Sin that occasion'd his Trouble, I shall not say. If he can open his Grief, without discovering the Sin, it may be, more is not necessary. He may put several Cases, of which his own may be one; which Cases being solved may give him just Grounds for Satisfaction, yet which of those in particular was his own remain concealed. But if he cannot in such manner conceal his Sin, as to get his Scruples solved, and obtain proper Directions to discover the Nature of his Repentance, whether it have been, and is in all respects as ought to be; it is certainly better for him to confess the particular Sin in a particular manner, than to go out of the World without having his Doubts satisfy'd, and his Faith settled upon sure Grounds: And Men ought in such Cases, to take great Care that they do not stifle the Checks of their Consciences, but seek quiet and comfort for them, from the Word and Promises of God, and the Methods prescribed in the Gospel for the procuring Pardon and Forgiveness, not presuming upon God's Mercy, without considering by what Means, and on what Conditions that Mercy is to be obtained. Now when a Man is troubled with

Doubt

doubts and Scruples, whether he has, in some particular Cases at least, done what is proper to procure the Divine Pardon, Will a bare confession to God the Sin that troubles him, give him quiet and Peace of Mind? Suppose it should be a Sin against his Neighbour, will a bare Confessing the Sin to God, take off the Trouble that lies upon his Conscience? If a bare Confessing our Sins to God, would procure our Pardon and quiet our Consciences, it is, give them good Grounds to be quieted. I leave, we might think what Dr. Cannon says, might be the Sense of the Church: But for much as bare Confession to God is not, (in the special Cases) all that is necessary to true Repentance, and without true Repentance, no Conscience ought to be quieted, it is plain, the Church meant something more by this *special Confession*, than a bare private acknowledgment of the Sin to God: The plain intent for which this *special Confession* is requir'd, is to ease the Man's Conscience of the Weighty Matter that troubles it. And the Church supposes the *Priest* the proper Person that should Direct and counsel, and Comfort the Penitent on this Occasion, and by these Words, plainly directs this *special Confession* to be made to him, that he may assist the Penitent in this Case, and teach and instruct him, whether his Repentance be what it ought, and what is yet proper to be done for him: And I believe Dr. Cannon is the first Man, that ever had the Confidence, to expound this Order of the Church in any other Sense. But to satisfy all Persons that the Church herself does suppose, that *special and private Confession* is to be made to the *Priest*, hear what she has oblig'd the Priest to on this Occasion, in the 3^d Canon, A.D. 1603. *If any Man confess his secret and*

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and hidden Sins to the Minister for the unburthening of his Conscience, and to receive Spiritual Consolation and Ease of Mind from him. We— straightly charge and admonish him, that he do not at any Time reveal, and make known to any Person whatsoever, any Crime or Offence so committed to his Trust or Secrecy (except they be such Crimes, as by the Laws of this Realm his own Life may be called into Question for Concealing the same) under pain of Irregularity. That under a Penalty of being incapable to perform any Ecclesiastical Functions for the Time to come. Here the Church plainly supposes that when a Man's Conscience is troubled with any Weighty Matter, the Method he is to take to remove this Weight, or Unburthen his Conscience is by Confession to the Minister: And yet though the Church has so clearly explain'd herself in this Canon, the Doctor cannot think that this special Confession was intended to be made to any other than Almighty God. But if the Church had intended no more, she might have very well spared the laying this Injunction of Secrecy on the Priest.

I am now come to the Doctor's Conclusion where, after he has call'd for a publick Declaration of the Bishops and Clergy, against the Doctrine of Confession to a Priest, and Absolution by him, that it be a Doctrine so plainly warranted by the Church; he says, That no Christian Priest has Authority to Absolve any one from his Sins: That a Priest to pretend to such Authority, is great Presumption: And that to think that such Authoritative Absolution is of the least Efficacy, for Pardon of Sins is gross Superstition: And that he shall be ready when call'd upon, to explain and support these Assertions. I therefore desire him to Explain and Support them, and to reconcile them with these few Passages in the Scriptures, and the

lish'd Doctrine of our Church. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, whatsoever ye shall loose in Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* Matt. xvi. 19. and xviii. 18. *Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever Sins ye retain they are retained.* Joh. xx. *Whose Sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, whose Sins thou dost retain, they are retained:* As the Form of Ordering Priests. *Almighty God has given Power and Commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his People being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their Sins:* in the Preface to the Absolution in our Morning and Evening Service. *Our Lord Jesus Christ hath left Power to his Church to Absolve all Sinners truly Repent, and believe in him—— And by his Authority I absolve thee from all thy Sins:* As in the Absolution of the Sick. *And Absolution hath the Promise of Forgiveness of Sins:* As in the Homily of Common-Prayer and Sacraments. When the Doctor has reconcil'd his Assertions, with these contrary *Assertions* of the Holy Scriptures and our own Church, he may hear farther from me: But I desire him to say more to the purpose than he has done in his *Account of his own Motions*, or I shall not think what he says, worth my farther Notice.

As to the Gentleman who has pretended to write *A Defence of the Doctrine of the Church of England*, I conceive what I have here written in answer to Dr. Cannon, may serve as a full Answer to all that he has written on this Subject: And as to what he has said about the *Validity of Lay-Baptism*, all his seeming Arguments on that Head are so fully Answer'd already, in a Book Entitled, *Dissenters, and other Unauthoriz'd Baptisms Null and Void, by the Articles, Canons, and Rubricks*

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Rubricks of the Church of England, in Answer
a Pamphlet called The Judgment of the Church
England in the Case of Lay-Baptism, and of Dissen-
ters Baptism, By the Author of Lay Baptism
valid, that I find no occasion to give myself a
trouble about that Matter ; for the Arguments
of this Anonymous Gentleman, tho' deliver'd
in other Words, are but the same with those
in the Pamphlet above-mention'd, call'd The
Judgment of the Church of England, &c. I do not
find myself Concern'd in any other parts of the
Pamphlet, those that are, I make no Question
know how to defend themselves : For I find
nothing in the whole Book but what may be
easily be reply'd to.

F I N I S.



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